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What Shall We Do with the Sunday School as an Institution.

George Lansing Taylor

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WHAT SHALL WE DO

WITH THE

SUNDAY-SCHOOL

—AS AN—

INSTITUTION.

—BY—

GEORGE LANSING TAYLOR, D.D.

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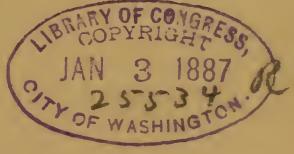

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NOTE.

This booklet was prepared and delivered as an essay before the New York Methodist Episcopal "Preachers' Meeting," a body of about two hundred ministers, mostly pastors. It has also been called for as an address before certain Sunday-School conventions. The discussions it has called forth have been encouraging, and votes have been passed requesting its publication, with a view to further discussion of the important subject which it barely enters upon. In the hope that, if hammered enough, it may prove a serviceable wedge to the further opening up of a matter, of vital importance to the churches, it is respectfully offered for the friendly consideration of fellow-pastors and Christian laborers.

THE AUTHOR.

WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL AS AN INSTITUTION?

SYNOPSIS.

I. Comprehend its Importance,
(1.) Quantitative and (2.) Qualitative.

II. Is the Sunday School Meeting the Demand of the Times?
Answer, No. in Five Points.

III. Explanation of the Comparative Failure,
In Three Points.

IV. Consequences of the Present Mal-adjustments,
In Six Points.

V. The Re-adjustments Needed,
In Six Points.

VI. The Benefits to be Anticipated from these Re-adjustments,
In Three Points.

WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH THE SUNDAY SCHOOL, AS AN INSTITUTION?

The asking of such a question implies a conviction in the mind of the writer that there is need that something should be done for, or with, the Sunday-School. In this conviction he believes that he stands not alone, but that this thought is in the minds of many of the wisest and truest friends of progress, in all branches of the Church. Yet this conviction is not due to a low estimate of the value of the Sunday-School as it now exists, but to a very high appreciation of what it has done in the past and is now doing, and a sincere desire that it may yet be and do all that it ought to be and do, as, in the writer's opinion, is not now the case. Hence arises the inquiry: What shall we do with the Sunday-School as an Institution?

In attempting to answer this question we submit the following points.

I. WE MUST UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL, OR RATHER OF WHAT THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL OUGHT TO BE, IN THE PRESENT AND FUTURE SYSTEM OF CHURCH WORK.

And under this head we remark

1. *The True Position for the Modern Sunday-School Cannot be Determined Merely in the Light of its Past History.* The present mal-adjustments of the Sunday-School to the wants of the Church are explained in the light of its *origin outside* of the Church, as a lay missionary movement; but to comprehend the demands of the *present* and the *future* the sooner we utterly forget that origin, except as a model of zeal, the better. Except in the case of "ragged schools," or a few of the irregular "city mission" schools, the situation of the modern Sunday-School is wholly different from that of the past. The average modern Sunday-School is wholly another thing from the original

and demands a wholly different place in the scheme of Church work.

On the score of *numerical magnitude* alone the quantitative importance of this demand is imperative. The "Year-Book" of the Sunday-School Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church, for 1886, gives a grand total of 1,818,032 scholars, with 246,054 officers and teachers, or a total of 2,064,086, in the Sunday-School host of our own form of Methodism, alone. But according to the "Methodist Year-Book" for 1886 the membership of the *seven* leading Protestant Church forms, in the United States, is as follows :

1.	Total Methodists, of all branches,	3,793,724
2.	" Baptists, " "	2,552,129
3.	" Presbyterians, of all branches,	1,002,944
4.	" Lutherans, " "	800,189
5.	" Disciples of Christ, (Campbellites) of all branches,	563,928
6.	" Congregationalists (Orthodox) of all branches,	387,619
7.	" Protestant Episcopalians, of all branches,	313,889
	Total of the seven groups,	9,414,442

But some of these statistics must have

been a year old when the table was compiled, so the true total must be at least 10,000,000 members, for these seven groups of Protestant churches.

Now if the Methodist ratio of scholars to members holds good throughout this 10,000,000 members, (and it should do so, for two fifths of them are Methodists), and if we take the minor Protestant bodies into account, we have an army of over 11,000,000 Sunday-School teachers and scholars in the Protestant Churches of the United States, an army numbering nearly *four times* the population of America when Independence was declared and achieved.

And this is only the Protestant Sunday-School army of the United States alone. How vast, then, is the Sunday-School interest of the whole world! The "*Church of England Institute*" reports that the Sunday-School scholars of all Christendom number, in the aggregate, not fewer than 16,000,000, taught by about 2,000,000 officers and teachers, or 18,000,000 in all. One-fifth of the whole population of Eng-

land and Wales are in Sunday-Schools, there being 600,000 teachers, and 2,500,000 scholars. To judge from these, and our American figures, the grand total for all christendom ought to equal, if not exceed, 20,000,000.

Another recent authority estimates that one-eighth of the Sunday-School population of the world is connected with the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States; and this estimate coincides, substantially, with the previous one. How immense, then, is, the importance of the Sunday-School work of the world; and how great is our responsibility as Methodists, into whose hands so great a share of this work has, by the blessing of God on our own labors, been committed. This is merely the numerical aspect of the question. But,

2. *Quality, as well as Numbers, must be Considered.* The qualitative importance of the subject is even greater than the quantitative. This mighty host consists mainly of the *young*, *children* and *youth*,

the educating, plastic, susceptible class, who are in the formative period of mind and character. They are mainly, also, from the better classes of our families, our self-supporting, temperate, moral families; and, in a vast majority of cases, from families who are in the ranks of Church membership. Moreover they are youth whose educational advantages, in our public schools, academies, and colleges, are vastly superior, on an average, to those of any previous generations the world ever saw, in this or any other land under the sun. They are getting a good start in life, in both a material and educational sense, far better than their parents had; and especially is this true of the children of foreign born parents, whose lot was often one of hopeless and illiterate serfdom, or next to that, in the Old World. With the population of America doubling oftener than once in thirty years, these children now in our Sunday-Schools are to see 100,000,000, and some of them 200,000,000, population in America, and of that population they

must be the guides and leaders! The educated and professional men and women, the preachers and teachers and authors; the lawyers and physicians and journalists; the capitalists, inventors and artists; the rulers and jurists and statesmen; nearly all the leaders of thought and action of the next generation, the future guides and lights of the mightiest race and nation on the globe, are now in the Protestant Sunday-Schools of America.

Ah, how wise, as well as witty, was Martin Luther's school-master at Eisenach, the old scholar and poet John Trebonius, who, when questioned why he always took off his cap and made a bow to his pupils, on entering his school-room, replied; "I make my bow to the great men of the next generation, who now sit in these boys' jackets on my benches." Just so it is the "great men of the next generation" who are now receiving, or failing to receive, the most momentous part of their education, the religious part, in our Sunday-School. The vastness of the destinies for

all the world hanging on the proper religious training of American Youth, is what only the spirit of prophecy can comprehend. This is the problem opening before us when we approach a broad and grasping considerations of the "Sunday-School question." And now we are prepared to inquire.

II. IS THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL, AS IT NOW EXISTS AMONG US, MEETING SUCH A DEMAND AS WE HAVE CONSIDERED FOR THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF AMERICAN PROTESTANT YOUTH.

Mind that we are not talking about the demand of Robert Raikes' time among the half-barbarous neglected masses of England, or about similar work in our city slums of to-day. There is manifest and great improvement even in this form of work, and room for much more improvement. But that is not the *great* Sunday-School work of our day and place in the world. That work now lies among *our own youth*, in our settled church life, all over the land, in all denominations. Are

we getting what our youth need, what the church needs, what the world needs, out of the Sunday-School as it now exists, and in view of the interests at stake? To this question we can see only one intelligent and candid answer possible, and that is No! Vastly not! Immensely not! We have had a glorious and blessed result, past and present, a result to shout over, and one that has been well shouted over; but we have never had, and never can have, the results needed, for these times, from the Sunday-School as hitherto constituted. But the first step toward a better future is always to get a clear comprehension of the lackings and short-comings of the present. To these, therefore, let us first turn our attention. Among the more manifest points of weakness in the Sunday-School system, as it now exists, we may note the following:—

1. *The Slender Qualifications of Too Many Superintendents and Teachers.* As a matter of necessity but very few Superintendents or Teachers are persons who

have had any special education in the line of Biblical or Religious Knowledge. This is not their fault, but it is because these things are not matters that commonly enter into the systematic education of the laity. But more than this, many of both Superintendents and Teachers are persons whose ordinary English education in common school branches is far from satisfactory. It is to be gladly admitted that some comparatively uneducated, Superintendents and Teachers have, by native good sense, and piety, and perhaps talents, been very useful, more so, sometimes, than some others of better education, but less of the other qualifications of nature and grace. But such shining exceptions prove nothing against the importance of a better educated staff of workers than the present system is, as a rule, able to command. But more than this, a great number of teachers are, and in the present system must be, persons of very immature character, and whose conception of their work, and of its require-

ments and duties, is very far below what it should be. Indeed, it cannot be denied that many frivolous persons are now acting as Sunday-School Teachers, some of them for lack of better material—or the apparent lack of it,—some at their own anxious desire, for the sake of the to them not inconsiderable social or business advantages of the position. And it will not be denied that, even among those fairly qualified in other respects, there is often a manifest lack of consecration to the high and holy responsibilities of the work. Thus much for the present about the qualifications of many of those who are engaged in the work. Although many of the best minds and most zealous hearts in the churches are engaged in our Sunday-Schools, yet we think the truth of our point will be admitted as to a large number.

2. *A Second Point of Weakness in our Present system is the Fact of the Loss of many of our Older Youth from the Sunday-School.* These are many of them from

our own christian homes, and sometimes the fault is no doubt in defective home training. But the *chief* fault is in the failure of the Sunday-School to meet the mental and moral wants of those spoken of, many of whom, in our better modern common school education, or higher education, are better educated, in some respects, than those who teach them. Those who thus, in their teens, go out of Sunday-School, are generally unconverted, and, alas! too often remain so, when better Sunday-Schools might have retained and saved them. But this loss of scholars from our schools points to another defect, namely:

3. *Bad Methods of Obtaining Scholars.* There are too many children in all our schools who are there from false motives. They have been induced to attend by presents or rewards given for attendance, either to themselves, or to some other scholar for bringing them in. In some subtle or open way they have been *hired* to attend. And when they have got the

rewards of attendance in one place, then they are off for "fresh fields and pastures new" in some other school. They become the class known to many city schools as "rounders," who go to Sunday-School distinctively for the "loaves and fishes," often attending two, sometimes more, schools, if the hours permit, and getting very little instruction from any. This class of "dead beats" and "tramps" are the legitimate creation of bad methods of getting scholars. Who would think of filling churches in that way, or of getting people converted by such methods. When scholars are brought by legitimate motives, they are more likely to stay and become useful members.

4. *But The Growing Separation of Feeling Between the Sunday-Schools and the Churches*, is a more notable and momentous matter than any of the preceding points. This separation of feeling shows itself in two ways.

a. Non-attendance at Church Service is its most common manifestation. This

takes place even among those who have not forsaken Sunday-School, both youth and adults, pupils and teachers. This is partly due to the seductive but dangerous mistake of calling the Sunday-School "*The Children's Church.*" The abyss of contrast between Sunday-School and church is lost sight of. For my part, much as I esteem the Sunday-School, and earnestly as I have labored for it, I would prefer that my children should never see a Sunday-School, rather than that they should lose the training in reverence, in worship, in devotion, and the superior instruction of sermons, which belong to church worship. When children of non-church-going parents are gathered into Sunday-School we recognize a great and good work done, and better still if, through Sunday-School, they are brought to attend church. But when the youth and children of our own families are kept away from church, necessarily or not, on account of Sunday-School, then very grave questions arise. No experienced pastor can avoid the feeling that in

thousands of cases, especially in villages and cities, the Sunday-School is an *actual obstacle* in the way of church attendance by children, and by many adults. And so we have the surprising phenomenon of seeing the Sunday-School, which was brought into being to bring children to church, now actually keeping away from church in many cases more children than it brings to church, and thus far defeating the end of its own existence! In many churches there would be more people, parents and children, in attendance upon the public services of the church without the Sunday-School than there are with it. Especially is this true where the Sunday-School is held at a separate hour from church service. Such an hour were undoubtedly best for the Sunday-School, if the Sunday-School were an *independent institution*, existing for its own sake. But when we see thousands of children out then, who attend no regular church service; and also many youth, and not a few adults, who, in consequence of the Sunday-

School, attend only *one* church service, we are led to great anxiety as to the benefits of such an arrangement. But,

b. A Still More Serious Element of Separation of Feeling arises from the Separate, or *quasi-separate*, *Organization of the Sunday-School Societies*, *Boards*, *or Managers from the General Governing Bodies of the Churches.* This fact has become the occasion of dissensions in many churches, and not a few churches, in various denominations, have been split asunder by it. And even where peace has never been disturbed there is always a weak point, and the possibility of trouble along this line. In view, therefore, of the slender qualifications of too many Superintendents and Teachers, of the loss of so many of our older youth from the Schools, and of the growing separation of feeling, shown both in falling off in Church attendance by scholars and teachers, and in friction of organization, we believe the Sunday-School Institution, as it now exists among us, is not adequately meeting, and

in its present form can not meet, the demand of our times in the Religious instruction of our youth. Nay more, we believe the Sunday-School, as it commonly exists, is in many cases an obstacle in the way of what would better supply the demand of the times, could we get at the thing wanted, and make it available. There is great pith in the old German proverb; "The *good* is a great foe to the *better*." By this time some good people will begin to wonder whether I am not really an enemy to the Sunday-School, and making an attack on it; but if they follow me to the end they will revise that suspicion.

And now we are ready to ask,

III. WHAT IS THE EXPLANATION OF THIS FAILURE OF THE MODERN SUNDAY-SCHOOL TO MEET THE WANTS OF THE CHURCH AND THE TIMES.

To this inquiry we answer:

1. *This Failure is not the Fault of the Officers and Teachers of the Sunday-Schools, at least not primarily so.* Please let our Sunday-School friends bear in mind that

we say that, and mean it. Our Sunday-School people have their short-comings, like other mortals, and, like other mortals, in many cases more than they need to have. Their lack of qualification might be made up, in part, at least, by more study, and wiser and more earnest study, and more prayer. But, taken as a whole, they are probably the most zealous class of workers in our churches; though there are always several, in every school, who for every reason, might better be scholars than teachers.

2. *This Failure is not, Primarily, the Fault of the Pastors.* The pastors have a great many faults and short-comings—as what layman don't know!—But most of the pastors do all, that, under the present system, they can, for the Sunday-Schools; and those who do most there generally do it at the expense of their higher work in the pulpit. In most cases, under the present plan, the church *loses*, rather than *gains*, by the pastor's being in regular service as teacher in the Sunday-School. All

honor to the pastors who *try*, and to the *few* who *succeed*, in this work. Honor, too, to the pastors who know better than to try, and who refuse to sacrifice the *greater* work for the sake of the *lesser*, however popular the sacrifice may be. Having considered where the fault of the failure is *not*, let us now consider where it *is*. And to this point we answer,

3. *The Root of the Failure of the Modern Sunday-School to Meet the want of our Times Lies in a Wrong Plan of the Sunday Church Work, and in a Wrong Organization of Working Forces, Growing out of that Wrong Plan.* There is a mal-adjustment of working forces, growing out of the great evolution of the Sunday-School, and the total change of relations that has taken place. If we deal with the question merely in the light of the qualifications of Teachers and Superintendents, and of published Lesson Papers, etc.,—of which this age has the best ever made—we shall make a great mistake. We shall be only tithing "the mint, anise, and cummin." We

shall be merely surface-scratching where subsoiling is needed. We need to deal with the organic place and relation of the whole institution to the church. What we need is *not patching but revolution.* The truth to be seen and comprehended is that, in the development of the Sunday-School, we have brought about a new form of church work and worship, viz: the *Teaching Service*; and we need to do this work, as we do the Preaching Service, with the presence, labors, sanction, and government, of the Pastor, the whole congregation, and the common governing body of the church, Quarterly Conference, Official Board, Session, Consistory, or what not. All idea of any separation of work or administration between the old people and the young, in work or worship, should be forgotten, at least so far as relates to this service. The very name and idea of "Sunday-School," except in the sense of mission scoools, should be abolished. We are not teaching our children to *read*, but training them in christian knowledge, piety,

and character. We have patched an old and venerable garment with one new piece after another, when the thing to be done was to make a new garment, and after a new pattern. The *origin* of this mal-adjustment is historical. It is involved in the origin of the very institution of Sunday-Schools. That was a missionary origin, outside of regular church action, and for the lack of it. It was a blessed work, one of the best movements in Christian History, but had it originated inside of church lines its organization would have been entirely different. It would never have been the *imperium in imperio* that, in practice at least, it comes too near to being now. All its machinery of societies, boards officers, etc., or nearly all, would have been unnecessary and unknown. The common organization of the church, somewhat modified and extended, with the Pastor at its head, would have been all-sufficient, and better than any more complicated machinery. The historical absurdity has been committed of taking a form of or-

ganization made necessary for *lack* of church work and church material, and *importing it bodily into the church.* The work greatly needed doing, but the mistake was, and still is, in not doing it like any other church work, through the regular authorities and methods of the church, modified to suit the case, but not pushed aside by a new organization. If the churches were not doing the work now, then welcome to any machinery that would do it. But the churches *are* doing it, and could do it better with the old machine out of the way. And now let us consider

IV. SOME OF THE CONSEQUENCES FLOWING FROM THE MAL-ADJUSTMENTS MENTIONED. Among these may be mentioned:

1. *An Overloaded Sabbath.* The present common scheme involves, generally, *three public services on Sunday*, for the same set of people, viz: two preaching services and the Sunday-School. Now the Christian Church has always held, with her

Divine Founder, that "The Sabbath was made *for man*, and not man for the Sabbath;" and that physical and mental *rest*, as well as *spiritual exercise*, was a part of the divine purpose in ordaining the Sabbath at Creation. But is not this idea of rest violated by holding three Sabbath Services for the ordinary Sabbath work of the same set of people all the year around? Of course we do not refer to seasons of revival, or to occasional special services, but for the ordinary and habitual Sunday work. It seems to us so, and that no habitual violation of any divine command, even through pious zeal, can be anything but wrong, and hence disastrous in the end.

2. *An Overworked Church*, ministry and laity, both young and old, is the next consequence. Some people may be inclined to laugh at the idea of an "overworked church," and as to the case of too many members the laugh were just. But it is to be borne in mind that it is those who are already doing the work who must do more work, if more work is to be done.

It is the "free" horses who are over-driven, not the lazy ones. And when the ministry and laity are overworked, then comes diminished preparation for the work, diminished reserve force and zest in it, diminished benefit, and to diminished numbers; and this must either be true of all the Church services, or else some services must be neglected for the sake of others. But the preacher must preach—whether he has the people, or the empty benches, to preach to, and through it waste the preaching and kill the preacher. And then,

3. *The Best Use of Church Workers for the Work is Impossible Under such Circumstances.* In the present system many of the best workers, by education, maturity, and piety, being indispensable at the two preaching services, cannot be had for Sunday-School work, and hence, as we have already noted, too many half-taught, giddy, and unsuitable persons must be used, greatly to the detriment of both the pupils and the Church. This is not said to find fault with the teachers as

a body, but with the system under which they work; though sometimes the fault is with Superintendents who seem to prefer pliable teachers to competent ones.

4. But a Still Worse Consequence is *The Practical Exclusion of the Ministers from one of the most Momentous Parts of their Work, as Pastors and Leaders of their Children and Youth.* In the present system it is almost impossible for the Pastor to bear his proper relation, and do his proper work, among the youth of his flock. Another officer, the Superintendent of the Sunday-School, becomes necessary; and, by no fault of his own, (if he is at all fit for the place), but by the inevitable effect, of the system, this brother, a layman, comes in as a buffer between the real shepherd and his flock, and that, too, the most tender and susceptible part of his flock, the Lambs, which the Lord so emphatically commanded his apostle to feed. And so the Sunday-School Superintendent, a layman, is thrust into the place which no man but the an-

nointed shepherd ought ever to occupy, in the mind and regard of the children and youth. The Pastor may be the shepherd of the *sheep*, the tough old saints and sinners, the rams and he-goats and bulls of Bashan, but not the shepherd of the lambs and the kids and the calves, the yearlings and two-year-olds, the young and plastic minds, the most hopeful part of his charge. Or, if he undertakes to do his work among the lambs he has to feel, and too often is made to feel, that he is doing it by the permission of another, who sometimes, at least, looks upon his work as an intrusion. The brother who ought to be the pastor's assistant and deputy, becomes, by virtue of an independent election, practically independent of the Pastor, in his control of the school; and sometimes, at least, assumes to be the master of both the Pastor and school. And so the instructed and anointed guide sometimes finds an ignorant and ambitious lay official making it unpleasant for him to perform one of his most sacred and mo-

mentous duties. And yet bear in mind that we say that this is more by the fault of the *system* than of the *men* who serve as our Sunday school Superintendents.

5. Another Consequence of the present system, closely allied to the preceding, is that *The Pastor is Stripped of the Authority, Rightly Inhering in his Office, of Guiding the Spiritual Instruction of Children and Youth by choosing his own Assistants in that Work.* The relation of the Class Leader in the Methodist Church to the Pastor, as his appointee, deputy and assistant, is one of the highest propriety, and the best possible model for that of all subordinate religious Teachers, the Sunday-School Teacher with the rest. Under some additional forms, or restrictions, perhaps, with the concurrence of the church authorities, in election, the Pastor should have the original nomination, if not the actual appointment, of those whose work, as religious Teachers, he is the fittest person to supervise.

6. The last consequence of the present

situation which I shall mention, and one of the most weighty of all, is *The Introduction of Another Governing Body, The "Sunday School Board," or "Society," or* whatever it may be called in various denominations, *to Divide and Burden and Complicate the Administration of the Church.* Simplicity, the absence of all unnecessary wheels or parts, and thus the saving of friction, is as sound a law in churches as in mechanics. And then the materials of which these Sunday-School societies or Boards are composed are often such as to add to the friction. Immature youth, often mere boys and girls, who know but little of the Discipline of the churches, or of Parliamentary forms, and have had but little experience in life or business, are, by the present system, brought into a voting, and often controlling, relation to very weighty matters, deeply affecting the welfare of the church. Owing their nomination solely to the Superintendent, and to only a concurrence, and often not even that, on the

part of the Pastor; and being also dependent upon the Superintendent for their assignments to work, they are plastic in the hands of the Superintendent, to whom, rather than to the Pastor, they have been accustomed to look from childhood, as the head and controlling power in the Sunday-School. Fortunately for the peace of the churches, the generality of our Superintendents have been wise and unselfish men, in whose hands practice has been better than theory or law. But the *system* includes in its organic structure the possibilities of, and almost the *bid* for, such an event as that which recently rent and distressed one of the oldest and most respected churches in Brooklyn, where an ambitious and refractory Superintendent, with a following of his own training for years, was able to defy the pastor and consistory of the Church, and to split an old Sunday-School asunder and carry off a large portion of it to start a rival Sunday-School in a hall near by, to the great injury of the Church to which

his allegiance was due, and which should have had the constitutional grip to have held him, or to have disciplined him at once. In fact frictions between Pastors and Church authorities, on the one hand, and Sunday School Societies and Superintendents on the other hand, are more or less inevitable, as the Sunday School Institution now exists ; and the Pastor who has never had such collisions must either have been a miraculously *wise* man, or a miraculously *lazy* one, or he must have had miraculous Sunday-School Superintendents. There is an *inherent vice in the plan*, both as to instruction and government, which nothing short of a radical change of adjustments can remedy. And now we are ready to inquire :

V. WHAT READJUSTMENTS ARE NEEDED, TO BRING THIS DEPARTMENT OF CHURCH WORK INTO HARMONY WITH ALL THE REST, AND SO TO REACH THE HIGHEST EFFICIENCY FOR ALL. To this inquiry we would suggest as the answer :

1. *Recognize the Fact that what we call the "Sunday-School" is in Reality a Public Church Service, and One of the most Important of the Day, and Treat it Accordingly.* Except in special seasons attempt only two principal services on Sunday, the *Preaching Service* and the *Teaching Service*; with a prayer meeting, or some vesper service, in the evening; or some of the anniversaries, Sunday-School concerts, or Temperance meetings, and the like, of which we ought to have more, with more opportunity for them.

2. *Abolish the Separate Office of Sunday-School Superintendent, and make every Pastor the Head of the Sunday-School as much as of the Church.* And leave out of the Discipline that little Latin snare, "*Ex-officio*," which so many good people misunderstand as meaning "complimentary," rather than actual. The pastor will need assistants, and should have the right of appointing them, as Class Leaders with us are appointed, or at least of nominating, them, as we make Stewards. On circuits,

where the Pastor has to visit more than one church on Sunday, the Assistant Superintendent would have to do most of the work; but he should do it as the Pastor's deputy and representative, and the Pastor, when present, should be in actual charge of the school, by office, and not by invitation. It is one of the strangest and most inconsistent anomalies in our church life that this is not so now; and that the Pastor of the church is known to the little people only as a gentleman wearing a black coat and a white neck-tie, whom their Sunday-School Superintendent frequently invites to talk to them "*for a few minutes*," with a significant look at the clock, and emphasis on the "*few*"! Instead of being in such a weakening and disorganizing position, the Pastor should be the presiding, guiding, inspiring genius of the whole school; and the children should grow up looking to him as their Leader, from the Infant Class onward. In this position all lesson reviews, catechisms, short sermons to children, children's

prayer meetings, every part of the work, —much of which is now neglected,— would be in the Pastor's hands where it ought to be, and he would be in the position to look after it. And furthermore, the whole relation of the membership to the pastor, for all of life, would be different and better, were this the position of things. Our children would not be spoiled for church loyalty for life by a disloyal atmosphere in the Sunday-School, as is now too often the case.

3. *Make the Teaching Service a Thing for the Whole Church, and Expect the Whole Church and Congregation to be in it.* Under the Leadership of the Pastor, and only so, can this work be accomplished, and old and young make a holy service together in the study of the word of God. In this way, also, can Normal Classes, of which every school should have one, be maintained, and thus a better class of teachers be raised up continually.

4. *Let the Common Governing Body of the Church, with perhaps a select committee*

from the wisest Sunday-School Laborers, Govern this Part of the Work just the same as all the others, subject to the Discipline of the Denomination. This would make an end of clashing, and elevate and dignify the whole. It would no longer leave some of the most weighty interests of the Church subject to the decision of inexperienced youth.

5. *Let the Common Revenues of the Church support this service, Like all others, and let them receive its Contributions in like manner.*

This will take away the claim—in this case a sophistical one in its application, since children's money comes from parents—that self-government should go with self-support; and thus would remove the financial fulcrum from the lever of disturbance and independence. It would also make an end of some of some objectionable methods of raising Sunday-School funds now too much in vogue.

6. *Let special Training for Sunday-School Work be a Part of the Theological*

Seminary Education of Every Preacher. This is done now, to a considerable extent, but let more of it be done, and done as it only can be done when the student looks to the management and training of a Sunday-School as just as much a part of his future work as preaching is. No man will study for mere theoretical knowledge as he will for what he expects to use in regular practice. And now, in conclusion, for a brief glance at

VI. SOME OF THE BENEFITS LIKELY TO FLOW FROM THESE PROPOSED CHANGES. Several of these have already been touched upon, but there are others to be mentioned.

1. *The Unification of the Church and Church Work.* All the organization, system, teaching, training, work, of the Church would thus come under the guidance of one leading and moulding mind, as is not now possible; and yet all the talent of the church would find scope for work, and probably be better worked than is now the case.

2. *Elevation of he Standard of Instruction.* The man called by God and the Church to the work of religious preaching and teaching, and professionally educated with a special view to that work, would now be in a position to give the youth of the church the especial benefit of his superior advantages. Not that he would dispense with teachers, nor dwarf their work, or lower its dignity, but, on the contrary, improve both them and their work. Having his proper relation to them, and having this work in its proper place in the Sunday programme, he has the liesure, and the duty, to study and prepare for his part, the review and normal teaching, just as well as for preaching. How very few lay Superintendents have either the time for such preparation, or the education or libraries necessary to make the best use of the time, if they had it. The fact that we have good Lesson Helps published ready to hand does not put the uneducated man on par with the man professionally educated and trained. The

best chest of tools ever manufactured, no matter how polished and sharpened, would not make a carpenter out of a hod-carrier, nor a watch-maker out of a carpenter. Tools are one thing, the art quite another. It must be recognized that the headship of the modern Sunday-School is practically a new office, and one far more closely allied to clerical than to lay work.

It is of the very essence of the ministerial office in its nature and character, a feeding of Christ's sheep and lambs, a breaking of the bread small between the Master's hands and the youth and little ones of his flock. For its spiritual character, especially, the Pastor should be at the head of this work, both in form and fact.

But there is much else that needs the Pastor's hand. The training classes for teachers need to use different studies from those of the school at large. They want *Bible Knowledge systematized.* Classes should be formed in Bible Geography, Ethnology and History, with maps and Chronology; Bible Archæology, with cuts

of objects, manners and customs; Bible Biography, Ethics, Natural History, Literature, etc., etc., etc. In all these things there should be some systematic training connected with every large or small Sunday school, and the Pastor is most commonly the only man in the church well qualified to oversee, if not to execute, such work.

3. The Last Benefit we will Mention, but one of Prime Importance, is that in this system *the Pastor comes, as a necessity, to know the Youth of his charge, and they to know him, as is in no other way possible.* One of the chief causes of the loss of many of our youth to the church is the inevitable, or nearly inevitable chasm, which the present system creates between the children and youth, and the pulpit. But once bring the Pastor into his proper relation to the children and youth, let them know him as their guide and leader from youth, and let them also be under the best culture and talent in the church, such as the Pastor's leadership, and time

for the service, would bring to his aid, and there would be a transformation in this matter that would be the joy and marvel of the church. The whole atmosphere of many Sunday-Schools would be changed, and the "nursery of the church" would have a cultivating and saving influence over the sprouts growing in it.

We believe this to be one of the largest and deepest of modern questions as to the internal economy of the church, and one most deeply affecting its prosperity. Certainly if there is any work in the whole round of church enterprise that demands, and has the right to claim, the best service of the Pastor, and of the ablest and best educated men and women in the church, that work is the instruction of her youth in the knowledge of the Bible and the truths of religion. And if anything in the present church scheme is mal-adjusted to this end, or if any new adjustments can help the work, then there can hardly be too much haste or firmness in the readjustment. We may never realize the ideal

church in this imperfect world, but the nearer we get to it, and the sooner we get there, the more we shall find the old and the young blessed in worshipping God and studying his word together; and the more fully will the prediction of *Isa. 54:13*, be fulfilled: "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children."

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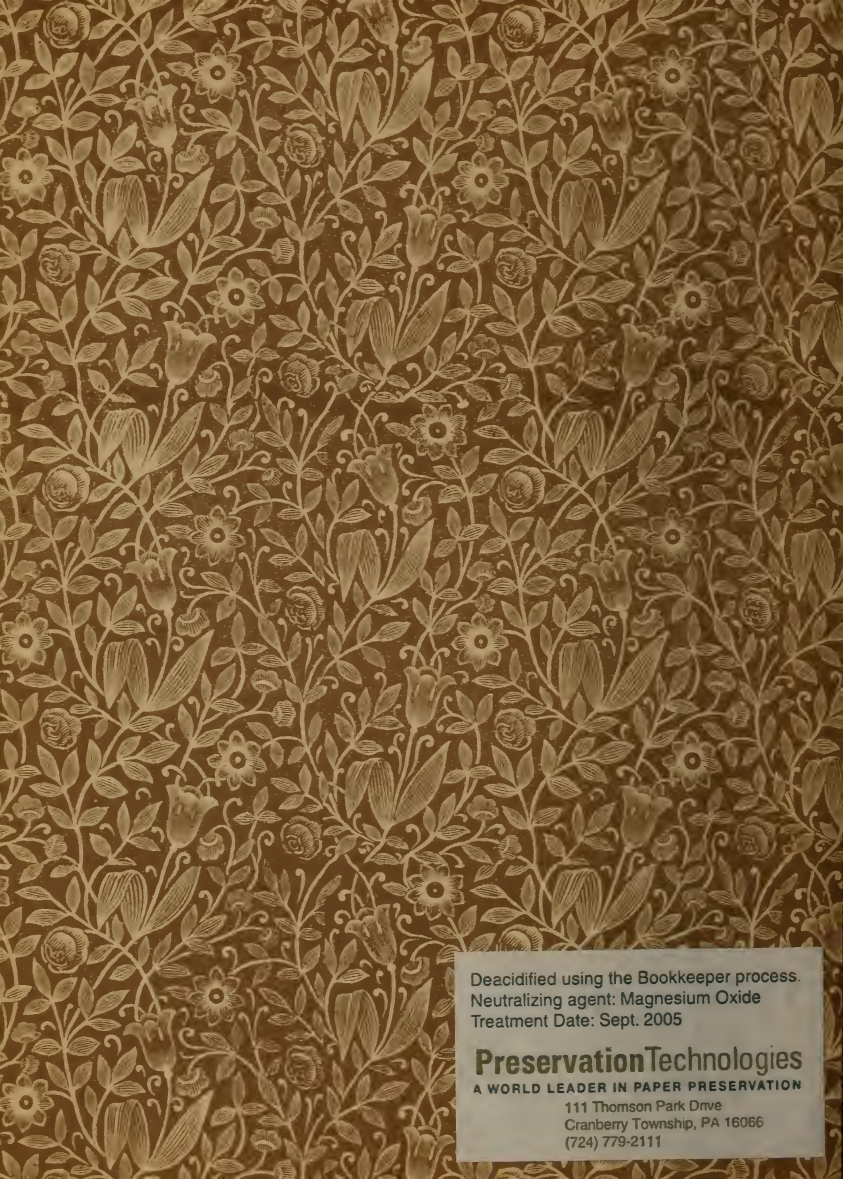

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